

Acts 9:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

Analysis

But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. The conspiracy's detection and elaborate countermeasures demonstrate both God's providence in protecting His servants and the intensity of opposition genuine gospel witness provokes.

Their laying await was known indicates divine providence through human means—likely sympathetic individuals warned Saul. God protects His chosen instruments when their work remains unfinished. This doesn't guarantee Christians avoid all danger but affirms God's sovereignty over life and death.

They watched the gates day and night shows determination and thoroughness. City gates were monitored checkpoints; constant surveillance made normal departure impossible. This detail emphasizes the plot's seriousness and Saul's danger. The conspiracy involved significant resources and organization.

The escape's necessity (Acts 9:25) required believers' creative faithfulness—lowering Saul in basket through wall opening. This combination of divine providence and human ingenuity characterizes biblical narratives. God protects through rather than bypassing human agency. Saul's humiliating escape—fugitive in basket—began pattern of weakness through which God demonstrates power (2 Corinthians 11:30-33, 12:9-10).

Historical Context

Damascus's city walls featured residential buildings built into fortifications, with windows opening outside walls. This architectural detail enabled Saul's escape (2 Corinthians 11:32-33). The ethnarch (Arabian king's governor) joined Jewish leaders in watching gates, suggesting extensive conspiracy.

Saul's escape around 37 CE forced departure to Jerusalem, where skeptical disciples initially refused fellowship (Acts 9:26) until Barnabas vouched for him. This initiated pattern throughout Paul's ministry—preaching, persecution, escape, new location. God used opposition to spread gospel geographically. What enemies intended for evil, God used for kingdom advance.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's providence work through human means rather than bypassing natural circumstances?
2. What does the intensity of opposition reveal about the gospel's threatening nature to human autonomy?
3. In what ways does God use persecution to advance mission by scattering witnesses?
4. How should believers balance trusting God's protection with taking prudent safety measures?
5. What does Saul's humiliating escape teach about strength manifested through weakness?

Interlinear Text

ἐγνώσθη δὲ τῷ Σαύλῳ ἡ ἐπιβουλὴ αὐτὸν παρετηροῦν
was known **But** ^{G3588} **of Saul** ^{G3588} **laying await** **him** **they watched**
G1097 G1161 G4569 G1917 G846 G3906

τε τὰς πύλας ἡμέρας τε καὶ νυκτὸς ὅπως αὐτὸν
And ^{G3588} **the gates** **day** **And** **and** **night** **to** **him**
G5037 G4439 G2250 G5037 G2532 G3571 G3704 G846

ἀνέλωσιν·
kill
G337

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 11:32 (Parallel theme): In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

Acts 25:3 (Parallel theme): And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

Acts 20:3 (Parallel theme): And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

Acts 20:19 (Parallel theme): Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: